

Sabine Schlickers and Vera Toro
Introduction

Many modern films produce disturbing effects and disorient the spectator. They transgress or abrogate standard narrative situations and configurations, question premises of causality and coherence, or obscure the distinction between (fictional) reality and fiction. In order to describe ludic devices of this kind systematically we need new narratological concepts. In this volume we present such a concept, ‘perturbatory narration’: a concept designed to describe complex narrative strategies that disrupt immersion in the acquired process of aesthetic reception.

Perturbatory narration is a heuristic concept, and as such subject to Mieke Bal’s caveat: “Concepts are sites of debate, awareness of difference, and tentative exchange. Agreeing doesn’t mean agreeing on content, but agreeing on the basic rules of the game: if you use a concept at all, you use it in a particular way so that you can meaningfully disagree on content” (Bal 2002, 25). In this sense, the concept proposed in these pages is applicable to a specific type of irritating narrative for which narratology has not yet found an appropriate classification, enabling typification and systematization of moments of narrative perturbation.

As such it takes up and further pursues the concept of paradoxical narration in literary texts developed in the Hamburg research group on narratology (1998 – 2002) by Klaus Meyer-Minnemann and Sabine Schlickers, and later extended by Schlickers in its analytic and typological dimensions to the field of film. Textual work with this larger transmedial corpus repeatedly encountered the combination of perturbatory narrative devices mentioned above – a cluster whose complex interactions had not yet entered the ambit of research. Schlickers (2015a) initially investigated the occurrence of these phenomena in the Argentine film *El Aura* (2005), which combines features of unreliable and fantastic narrative: “The disruptive impact [of this film] derives from a juxtaposition of unreliability with the ambiguity typical of fantastic narration” (Schlickers 2015a, 13): In the end, these two – at first glance mutually exclusive – readings of the film are both possible, both intended, and both equally convincing. The coexistence in many literary and filmic narrations of what seemed incompatible narrative strategies gave rise to a narratological dilemma. It was with the intention of subsuming and integrating this complex interplay of deception, paradox and/or empuzzlement into the critical consideration of literature and film that we developed the model of combined narrative devices and the framing concept of perturbatory narration.

Here, the concept is applied exclusively to film, although it is equally valid for literary texts.¹ The effect to which it refers is by no means dysphoric: on the contrary, the disturbance or disorientation in question is received by readers/viewers positively.² Many areas of the phenomena we describe as perturbatory narration have already been studied and accorded adjectives such as ‘disorienting’, ‘complex’, ‘ludic’, ‘deviant’, ‘extraordinary’, ‘unconventional’, ‘unnatural’, ‘unreliable’ etc.³ Frequently used are also the notions ‘puzzle films’ (Buckland 2009), ‘mind-game movies’ (Elsaesser 2009), ‘mindfuck movies’ (Eig 2008), ‘mind-benders’ (Johnson 2006), etc. However, on closer examination these categories are all in some way problematic, for they are either subjective (e.g. ‘complex’), or psychological (e.g. ‘disorienting’, ‘perturbing’), or they define themselves negatively (‘un’-terms such as ‘unconventional’, ‘unreliable’ or ‘unnatural’). The clear generic agreement that one is dealing with “a film designed specifically to disorient you, to mess with your head” (Johnson 2006, 129), and many other such useful insights, do not conceal the lack of narratological modeling and systematization in such labels. It is for this reason that we have introduced a new technical term⁴ which allows systematization of individual devices and perturbatory strategies in their ludic interplay.

1 Sabine Schlickers and Vera Toro have recently been engaged – within the framework of an exploratory project at the University of Bremen (4/2015–4/2017) – on a study of perturbatory narration in literature and film (*La narración perturbadora: un nuevo concepto narratológico transmedial*, Madrid: Iberoamericana, forthcoming) which (re)models the individual strategies of deception, paradox and empuzzlement and illustrates their functioning and interplay in selected hispanophone narratives. Simultaneously with this volume Schlickers has published an article on perturbatory narration in literature and film which will appear soon in a Special Focus edited by Brian Richardson in *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* (ed. Shang Biwu).

2 Wolfgang Iser (1984 [1976], 208–214) already remarked on the productivity of moments of conflict, discrepancy, disruption, frustration, ambiguity and figural fragmentation for the reader of fiction. However, he did not explicitly connect these receptive processes to narrative strategies, but saw them as inevitable aspects of aesthetic impact, above all in the complexity evoked by their sheer frequency (213).

3 Cf. e.g. Eckel et al. (2012), Mittell (2006), Kindt (2005), Alber and Heinze (2011), Alber (2016), Leiendecker (2015).

4 Referring to Niklas Luhmann, Carsten Gansel cites disturbance as a concept of systems theory; before him Maturana had introduced the term to constructivism. Perturbatory narration, however, is not per se compatible with this usage. Systems theory sees the disturbance (and ensuing change) as coming from outside (Gansel 2013, 9); narratology sees it as inherent to the system – as a constituent of the text that in principle subscribes to the doxa (cf. below) but suspends it by employing the narrative techniques presented here.

1 Narrativity and content

As a narrative principle, perturbatory narration is seen as text-related and hence as referring to a combination of narrative strategies whose dislocating impact can be reinforced by dislocating content:⁵ presentations of physicality and violence exciting fear and revulsion, as well as dystopias, horror films, death and accident fantasies and/or scenarios are certainly perturbing, but they only fall within the ambit of perturbatory narration if they reveal its formal procedures.

In its present application perturbatory narration is restricted to fictional narratives: our modeling is based on the double speech act situation that marks such texts as more complex than factual ones. But our broad concept of fiction extends to ‘hybrid genres’ like mockumentary or docufiction, even though these may employ some of the authentication strategies of factual discourse.⁶ Following Schmid (2005, 13 and 18–19) and Kuhn (2011, 55–57), we see the narrativity on which perturbatory narration is premised as involving in the broadest sense a story (*histoire*) incorporating a change in at least one state (or situation) within a given space of time. This requires the explicit representation of the initial and final states, but not necessarily of the process and conditions of change. In the narrower sense, narrative texts are communicated via a narrator or via another narrational instance: in film the role of the extradiegetic narrator is played by the invariably heterodiegetic “camera” (Schlickers 1997)⁷, which, following Kuhn (2011), can be split into a visual and a verbal narrational instance.

5 This clarifies the distinction between our concept and unnatural narratology: the latter is based on cognitive premises (e.g. frame-theory and possible-worlds theory) and the question “whether the represented scenario or event could exist in the real world or not” (Alber 2013). ‘Unnatural’ is understood, then, as ‘impossible’, and ‘natural’ as ‘possible’. But from other points of view ‘unnatural’ may mean ‘anti-’ or ‘non-mimetic’ (Richardson 2011). ‘Unnatural’ may already be conventionalized in the form of “physical, logical, or epistemic impossibilities”, in which case it may be taken to cover alienation effects understood as formalistic defamiliarization (Alber 2013). Defining the boundary between the natural and unnatural – or the conventionalized and the not-yet-conventionalized – is in any case problematic, not to say arbitrary, for “the only way to respond to narratives of all sorts (including unnatural ones) is through cognitive frames and scripts” (Alber 2013). It may, then, be difficult to say whether or not the ‘possibility’ or ‘impossibility’ of narrative elements is in the concrete instance relevant. The perception of a narrative as factual or fictional, on the other hand, may be taken to possess greater relevance than the referential scope of its elements vis-à-vis the real world.

6 Schlickers (2015b); for a narratological perspective on authenticity cf. also the excellent article by Weixler (2012).

7 Cf. Schlickers (1997, 75–83) for the contentious discussion of this issue within film narratology. The latest critique comes from Thon (2016, 145), for whom Schlickers “[leaves] open why one

As “every narrational form [entails] a (re)construction of causal relations between events occurring in time – i. e. events following not only on each other but from each other” (Abel, Blödorn and Scheffel 2009, 1) – texts that bypass such relations have a particularly disruptive impact. The close contextual relation between narrativity and cognition in the creative-receptive process is addressed by David Lynch when, speaking of his film *Inland Empire* (2006), he says that he intends his viewers to experience, not to understand (cf. Oliver Schmidt’s article in this volume). Despite its extreme incoherence, the film’s narrative skeleton is inherently constitutive of the perturbation it evokes (cf. Jörg Türschmann’s article on ‘subtractive cinema’, a mode whose minimal narrativity and virtual absence of events confirms these premises).

2 The narrative doxa

The initial task is to indicate what narrative conventions are, in fact, questioned, transgressed, abrogated, or given new life by perturbatory narration. Here we appeal to the doxa – the consistent set of conventions governing the narrative systems of the age. This applies to both aspects: the narrated (*histoire/énoncé*) and the structure and mode of its narration (*discours/énonciation*). Perturbatory narration is concerned primarily with the narrational constituents of the doxa; but, given the vital link between narration and narrated, it frequently extends to the narrated. Whatever the case, the regulatory mechanisms only become visible when their transgression or abrogation becomes visible. Hence – reflecting the need for consistency and coherence – precise textual determination of the individual instances, levels and components of the narrative system is central to our conception of perturbatory narration.⁸ Film studies on complex and confusing narrative structures generally describe these as deviating from classical Holly-

would want to use the camera as a metaphor for the ‘source’ of the audiovisual representation as well as how exactly the latter becomes a ‘fictional instance’ without being represented as such”. He proposes a “nonnarratorial audiovisual representation”, which he attributes to a “hypothetical author collective” (171). Despite the terminological differences, these positions are relatively close, as in both models the “camera” and the audiovisual representation belong to the extradiegetic level of filmic narration and are part of neither the *story* nor the *storyworld*.

⁸ The concept of doxa is not to be confused with Grice’s (1975) maxims of communication, whose application to fictional narratives is in any case disputed. On the one hand these maxims have been used *ex negativo* in the attempt to define narrative unreliability (Kindt 2008); on the other hand it is precisely their transgression – aka literaricity, polysemy, ambiguity etc. – that underlies the unique fascination of literary and filmic texts.

wood conventions, especially with regard to spatiotemporal causality (Bordwell 1985; 2006).

The following description of the doxa is based on the systematization of paradoxical narration in literary texts (cf. Grabe et al. 2006). However, we are concerned here with the logical significance of paradox not only as an irresolvable contradiction but as '*para*-doxa' – 'against the doxa' – in the senses described above. The first fundamental distinction in this respect is that between the levels of *discours/énonciation* and *histoire/énoncé*. We would add that the narrated (and hence the narrator) must belong unambiguously to a specific level of communication and fiction: if the act of narration, for example, is extradiegetic, it cannot later suddenly become intradiegetic without becoming paradoxical. If the narrator is autodiegetic, he/she cannot at the same time and in relation to the same story be heterodiegetic.

A second point concerns the ontological difference between fiction and reality: empirical extratextual reality must be clearly distinguishable from the diegetic reality represented in the fiction – as must nested representations of reality within the fiction. Thirdly, it must be possible for the reader/viewer to unambiguously reconstruct the narrated fictional world – or 'narrative reality', as Orth (2013) has it. We see this as precluding the existence of parallel worlds. It is the flouting of these rules (or assumptions) of coherence that gives rise to friction and perturbation.

Our hypothesis is that the transgression or abrogation of the narrative doxa actively involves not only paradox in the twofold sense indicated above, but also the other two perturbing narrative strategies: deception and empuzzlement. It is the mutual interplay of these strategies that undermines the coherence and plausibility of the doxa. For the sake of simplicity, however, that interplay is not represented in the following diagram, which allocates specific devices to the three core narrative strategies of perturbatory narration.

3 Typology of perturbatory narration

PERTURBATORY NARRATION		
Deception	Paradox	Empuzzlement
unreliable narration: twist	metalepsis	indefiniteness and/or ambiguity (temporary or permanent) regarding
false leads	pseudodiegesis	reality, space, time, causality
lies	meta-morphosis	omissions
paralipsis	endless loop	fantastic mode
paralepsis	strange loop	
false focalization, ocularization, auricularization	Möbius strip	
	<i>mise en abyme</i>	
	<i>aporétique</i>	
	<i>mise en abyme à</i>	
	<i>l' infini</i>	

Fig. 1: Typology of perturbatory narration

1. The narrative strategy of *deception* initiates a conscious reinterpretation of narrated events or characters whose presentation is revealed as false by e.g. a sudden change of focalization. Based on unreliable narration (cf. Leiendecker 2015), it can be communicated by surprising incursions, false leads, lies, paralipsis/paralepsis, false focalization/ocularization/auricularization etc. All of these procedures bring about a twist that of itself triggers a recursive mechanism, a search for possible clues in a second reading etc. In contrast to the other two strategies of perturbation, deception must be recognized as such if it is to function at all, and a valid solution must in the end be available.

2. *Paradox* is an unresolved contradiction in which *what is* (and hence what is possible within the doxa) and *what is not* (and hence what is impossible within the doxa) are presented in spatio-temporal simultaneity. Narrative procedures of metalepsis (Meyer-Minnemann 2005; Schlickers 2005), pseudodiegesis, metamorphosis,⁹ endless loops, strange loops and Möbius strips, as well as *mise en*

⁹ 'Meta-morphosis' is newly introduced here to narratology. We use the term to designate a paradoxical superimposition of levels of being, time or space. In Alain Robbe-Grillet's novel *Dans le labyrinthe* (1959, 22–26), for example, the intradiegetic description of a soldier waiting in the snow and the hypodiegetic description of a painting in a bar are superimposed in such a way that they can no longer be differentiated. In the short film *El agujero negro del sol* (*The Black Hole of the Sun*, Julio Quezada Orozco 2002) the hierarchically ordered levels of communication

abyme aporétique and *mise en abyme à l'infini* (Meyer-Minnemann and Schlickers 2004) generate contradictions of this kind, which do not allow of resolution.

3. *Empuzzlement* includes the realm of the fantastic with its inexplicable elements and incompatibilities with physical reality that break into the order of the fictional world and raise questions about the semantic coherence of the text, leading to what is known in reception aesthetics as *hésitation*.¹⁰ Empuzzlement arises out of a (temporarily or permanent) ambiguity in the spatio-temporality and causality of the narrated order: in the question what in the fictional world is real (and can be remembered as such) and what is dreamed, imagined, fantasized etc. In the configuration of narrated reality – for that is what is at stake here – focalization plays an important role. Orth's concept of indeterminate focalization (2013, 240), for example, might readily be applied to the ambiguity and polysemy caused by significant dissonances between picture and soundtrack in forking-path or multiple-draft narratives, where various forms of omission are decisive for producing unclarity.¹¹ Striking stylistic devices like unusual point-of-view shots, split screen, iris diaphragm, slow motion, frame jumps, digital effects, animated sequences, morphing, incongruent music etc. can be considered empuzzling when they hinder the unambiguous reconstruction of the fictional world. With the exception of the fantastic mode, empuzzlement may, however, be resolved within the narrated world, though as a rule such resolution serves to construct further polysemous fictional universes.

are fused in a short-circuited world of fantasy where dreamer and dreamed meet – and where it also becomes evident that the assumed hierarchical order can be reconstituted in reverse (cf. Sabine Schlickers' article in this volume).

10 Antonsen (2009, 131–132) modifies the common definition of the fantastic as indecisiveness about two different, rationally incompatible systems of reality, because “beyond the fact of the fantasm, nothing can be said about that second system. Nor does the simple observation that the fantasm is incompatible with the reality invoked by the text necessarily lead to the conclusion that a second order of reality has been introduced” (131, our translation). Instead, Antonsen posits a radical poetological impossibility (cf. Vera Toro's article in this volume). Both conceptions of fantastic fiction would seem pertinent: some texts offer two incompatible systems of reality; others work with the contingent incursion of an impossible event.

11 Dablé (2012) cites in this context indeterminacy, omissions, decontextualizations, interruptions and presentational voids – but these terms refer to very different phenomena. Nevertheless, Dablé's concept of decontextualization (129) approximates that of empuzzlement: “For the viewer, a simple (re)construction of the events [is] impossible, for they cannot be contextualized. Various strategies can be used to produce this type of void: immanent textual contradictions, acoustic and visual collisions, breaks in the plot etc., all of which prevent reconstruction of per se related narrative elements” (our translation).

We are acutely aware that every narrative strategy listed above deserves – and in many cases has already enjoyed – detailed individual treatment, and we base a number of our assumptions on prior work in this field.¹² Nevertheless, there is no narratological or terminological consensus about these strategies and devices, nor even about terms such as ‘metadiegesis’ or ‘hypodiegesis’, which are also frequently used in this volume.¹³ Moreover, specific narrative procedures and parameters can be traced in several of the strategies concerned, even when these are not distinguished a priori. Thus, pseudodiegesis is at the same time a paradoxical and a deceptive technique. Similarly, false focalization leads to deception, indeterminate focalization to empuzzlement.

4. Combinatorial dynamics of perturbatory narration

The key to our modeling lies in the interplay of individual devices of the three narrative strategies presented above, which have hitherto been regarded as unrelated. The following diagram illustrates this interplay.

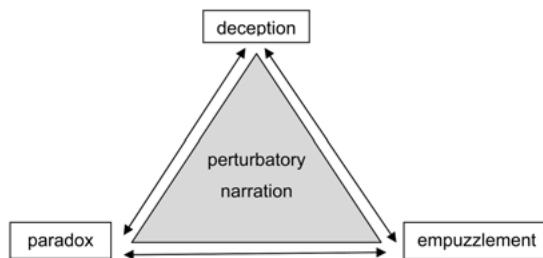


Fig. 2: Combinatorial dynamics of perturbatory narration

Our modeling is to some extent comparable with what Dominik Orth calls ‘multipluralization’: the narrative integration of “various forms of pluralistic narrative reality, combining intentional deception, for instance, with [the] imaginations [of a figure] that deviate from narrative reality” (Orth 2013, 257, our trans-

¹² On unreliable film cf. Orth (2005) and Leiendecker (2015), on fantastic film Pinkas (2010), on puzzle and mind films cf. above, on paradoxical narrative Grabe et al. (2006), on hybrid spaces in film Schmidt (2013), and on plural realities in literature and film Orth (2013).

¹³ We intend to address these deficits in our forthcoming study of perturbatory narration in hispanophone literature and film (cf. footnote 1).

lation). These two procedures, however, are mutually exclusive – or at least cannot be clearly subsumed into a single category of plural realities. The concept of narrative perturbation, on the other hand, allows narratological mapping of precisely this ‘impossibility’ – i. e. of the occurrence in the text of deceptive *and* puzzling, deceptive *and* paradoxical, puzzling *and* paradoxical or deceptive, paradoxical *and* puzzling narrative devices. Hence, despite the partial overlap in the phenomena and relationships they examine, Orth’s approach takes a markedly different angle from our own. While he typifies the various pluralities in fictional reality and *then* inquires about narrative strategies, we determine perturbing strategies up front as violating the doxa – and from this angle the typification of narrative reality only bears on one dimension of the doxa.

5. Case study

That perturbatory narration has currently reached the popular TV genre of crime drama is evident from *Wer bin ich? (Who am I?)* – the final broadcast in the 2015 *Tatort* (‘Crime Scene’) series, shown on German television on December 27, 2015. Starring Ulrich Tukur as inspector Murot, and set in Wiesbaden (near Frankfurt), this highly self-referential, ironic work, sparkling with metafictional *aperçus*, combines procedures from all perturbatory strategies. On the intradiegetic level the characters appear as the real actors they are, with their real names, in the middle of a shoot for a Wiesbaden crime film. Tukur, who plays the inspector, finds himself – in his real-life-outside-the-*Tatort*-in-the-*Tatort* – suddenly involved in a murder case. After a night on the town he wakes up in his hotel room remembering nothing. He is suspected of having involved a young floor manager, who had in the same night won € 80,000 in the casino, in a fatal accident. Tukur’s blackout does not even lift when he finds the money in his hotel room, but he does wonder at the diabolical expression on his face on a CCTV camera that recorded him leaving the casino – which he also cannot remember. After various developments during which his features are strikingly altered, the unexpected twist (deceptive narrative strategy) finally comes when, in the real-cross-examination-room-of-the-TV-series-police-station, Tukur encounters himself as *Tatort* inspector Murot, who looks just like him at the beginning of the film. Murot confesses to both the murder and the theft of the money: he did it, he says, because he could no longer tolerate existing only during the shooting of a film and has now swapped his role with Tukur’s – whereupon he goes off to Italy, leaving Tukur to return alone to the semi-deserted film set. From the point of view of narrative strategy, the deception and empuzzlement of a fantasy-doubling complete with role-swap are combined here with the paradox of an ontological metalepsis.

For the popular crime genre, these narrative strategies are rather extraordinary, but they have innumerable literary predecessors from as far back as the first half of the twentieth century. Ontological metalepsis is a feature of Miguel de Unamuno's *Niebla* (*Fog*), whose character converses with the author – skilfully imitated by Daniel Kehlmann in the “Rosalie Goes Off to Die” episode in *Ruhm* (*Fame*). And the fantasy-doubling of a character occurs in Jorge Luis Borges' “Borges y yo” (“Borges and I”), as well as in “The Way Out” episode (also in Kehlmann's *Fame*), which obviously served as hypotext for the *Tatort* film.¹⁴ Transmigration occurs in a number of Julio Cortázar's stories, for example in “Lejana” (1951) and “Axolotl” (1956).

Combining the narrative strategies of deception, paradox and empuzzlement, the *Tatort* film stands out as a perturbatory film *par excellence*; all the more so in its flagrant departure from the conventions and expectations of the genre. Many addicts of the Sunday evening show criticized *Wer bin ich?* as slow, boring and indigestible, and its surprising resolution made them feel they were being taken for a ride. However unintended by the film-makers, such reactions from the viewing public are also among the effects of perturbatory narration – which is why we incorporate into our model the implied viewer¹⁵ as the inherent correlative to the implied author. Both are historical instances¹⁶, the implied reader/viewer serving as ideal recipient as well as postulated addressee (Schmid 2005, 69). Given the controversy surrounding these constructs (Kindt and Müller 2006 vs. Phelan 2004 and 2008 and Schmid 2005), however, and given, too, that so-called cognitive narratology is (or should be) as germane to its processes as empirical investigation, it may be concluded that the disruptive modalities, functions and effects of perturbatory narration can also be meaningfully studied on real recipients.

14 The actor Ralf Tanner presents himself in *Fame* as the imitator of his own person, but he then actually encounters a Ralf Tanner imitator, talks to him, and watches a film featuring himself, although he can't remember having acted in it. His contradictory identity remains unresolved – or in Orth's (2013, 218) words: “Two variant narrative realities are established, one in which Ralf Tanner has, and one in which he has not made a film called ‘With Fire and Sword’”. In contrast to this, the *Tatort* film offers a resolution of the two contradictory models of reality.

15 Cf. Wolfgang Iser (1972) and Wolf Schmid (2005, 65–67).

16 Whereas Iser models an ahistorical implied reader.

6. Film-studies on perturbatory narration in this volume

The project, concept and modeling of perturbatory narration were prepared and discussed beforehand in a 3-day conference in Bremen involving all participants. The individual essays in this volume demonstrate the interplay of the different narrative strategies of perturbatory narration in contemporary films from Canada, the USA, Mexico, Argentina, Spain, France and Germany. It will be apparent that contemporary Canadian film is prominently represented in the overall field of vision, with e. g. experimental works like *The Tracey Fragments* (2007), as well as subtly disturbing films like *Enemy* (2013), whose complex time-puzzle is only evident on second viewing. A further point is the historically embedded quality of perturbatory narration: it may be assumed that the effect will wear off in the course of conventionalization, although the analyses in this volume demonstrate adequately enough that this level of satiety has not yet been attained.

Julia **Eckel** bases her consideration of perturbation as a narrative strategy on a reflective analysis, with reference to Gansel and Ächtler (2013) and Jäger (2004), of the distinction between disturbance and perturbation. She then applies the concept of perturbatory narration to an analysis of the highly experimental Canadian film *The Tracey Fragments*, which combines the devices of the three strategies of perturbatory narration with stylistic disturbance created by split screens.

Andreas **Veits** combines a close formal analysis of perturbatory structures in Quentin Dupieux's *Rubber* (2010) – an illusion-breaking film featuring a killer automobile tire – with a cognitive narratological perspective that highlights the recipient's role in the perturbation resulting from incoherent film worlds. On the one hand he links the concepts of storyworld and doxa; on the other his reflections on the actualization of perturbatory potential – especially that of genre-hybrid narratives – emphasize the importance of the recipient's knowledge of contexts and genres.

Vera **Toro** focuses on empuzzlement as one of the three key strategies of perturbatory narration – and, because it has so far been little researched, the one most in need of systematic modeling. Arguing (like Dominik Orth) from a strict concept of ambiguity – to which she adds the broader concept of indeterminacy – she distinguishes temporary from permanent empuzzlement and illustrates the workings of the strategy in two films by the Spanish director Julio Medem, *Vacas* (1992) and *Tierra* (1996).

Stephan **Brössel**, in contrast to Toro, classifies temporary empuzzlement as a strategy of deception. Taking as his example Robert Lepage's *Possible Worlds*

(2002), he also differs from Toro in modeling narrative empuzzlement on a wider concept of polyvalent, ultimately irresolvable ambiguity which produces equally valid interpretations.

Inke **Gunia** analyzes the complex empuzzlement procedures of Miguel Cohan's *Betibú* (2014) – a film version of the crime thriller of the same title published in 2011 by the Argentine author Claudia Piñeiro. Charged with historical and political connotations and intertextual references, and narrated with great virtuosity, Cohan's film keeps audiences on tenterhooks not only with its open-ended story of a team of investigators headed for ultimate failure, but also with inconsistent and incoherent strategies of plausibility on several levels.

Dominik **Orth** on the one hand examines empuzzlement structures in Jaco Van Dormael's Film *Mr. Nobody* (2009) as an example of plural realities, as a non-linear narrative with multilinear time dimensions and as forking-path-narration; on the other hand he shows the capacity of the model of perturbatory narration to explicate the multiple inconsistencies and ambiguities of the film. Finally he proposes three further theses on perturbatory narration to be tested on a larger corpus.

Erwin **Feyersinger** focuses on empuzzlement structures in Shane Carruth's *Upstream Color* (2013), where he locates these structures above all on the level of *discours*, but the film is also disturbing on the *story* level. The highly puzzling American film further exemplifies the other two basic structures of perturbatory narration: paradox and deception. The *ostranenie* effect becomes reinforced by genre blend, which functions paradoxically, and by generic cues which mislead the audience.

Matthias **Brütsch** proposes a slightly modified version of Schlickers and Toro's tripartite model of perturbatory strategies, differentiating between two variants of unreliable filmic narration. He examines and compares various combinations of deception strategies with four further perturbing narrative patterns exemplified in *Abre los ojos* (1997), *Identity* (2003), and *Dockpojken* (*Puppet Boy*) (2008), and finally advances a number of theses on different degrees of perturbation.

Heinz-Peter **Preusser** reconstructs in detail the complex narrative and fictional levels in David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999), and argues that the perturbation arising from the film's strategies of deception and paradox derives its unique aesthetic force from a combination of irresolvable ambivalence and latent coherence, exciting active artifact emotion in the recipient.

Jeff **Thoss** illustrates, on the example of two sequences from Nicolas Roeg's *Bad Timing* (1980), how unconventional continuity editing can fuse two different strands of time and plot and, together with other strategies of deception and empuzzlement, make an open question of the film's diegetic events.

Bernd **Leiendecker** discusses the highly ambiguous Canadian thriller *Enemy* (2013) as an example of deceptive, perturbing and paradoxical narration, showing how the (now fairly conventional) strategy of unreliable narration is implemented there in an unconventional way. On the basis of polyvalent cues he reads Denis Villeneuve's *doppelgänger* film as a time-puzzle in which the ambiguous chronological order of central scenes allows both linear and non-linear interpretations. On various levels of reality the recurrent spider metaphor contributes further to the film's empuzzlement.

Oliver **Schmidt** analyzes the concept of space in David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006), inquiring into the role of the strategies of deception, paradox and empuzzlement in generating spatial perturbation. He argues that *Inland Empire* thematizes not only the conditions and limits of perturbatory narration but the limits of filmic narration as such.

Sabine **Schlickers** illustrates the complex dynamic interplay of perturbing – especially paradoxical – narrative procedures. After demonstrating the different modeling possibilities suggested by the fictional worlds of two Mexican short films, *Juegos nocturnos* (1992) and *El agujero negro del sol* (2002), she analyzes the feature film *El incidente* (2014), in which a Möbius strip comprising two strange loops is complemented by elements of the fantastic that further heighten the film's perturbatory potential.

Jörg **Türschmann** applies the concept of perturbation – in a reception-focused context – to films by Lisandro Alonso, Bruno Dumont, and Béla Tarr which, following Fiant, he terms 'subtractive'. Although they strictly speaking fall within the doxa, such films nevertheless constitute a limiting case of narrative: their prolonged shots give the impression of stretching time to the point where extratextual and diegetic reality are virtually indistinguishable and the underlying promise of fiction to tell a story is unmasked as a deception. Closely analyzing the films' frustrating play with viewer expectations, Türschmann shows how this is rooted in the presentation of situations of permanent annunciation, as well as in *effets de réel*, and in the viewer's persistent scrutiny of filmic motifs for meaning.

Apart from the chapters by Erwin Feyersinger, Bernd Leiendecker and Jeff Thoss, the book has been translated from the German by Joseph Swann.

Filmography

Abre los ojos (Open Your Eyes). Directed by Alejandro Amenábar. 1997. Spain/France/Italy: Artisan Home Entertainment, 2001. DVD.

- Bad Timing*. Directed by Nicolas Roeg. 1980. UK: The Criterion Collection, 2005. DVD.
- Betibú*. Directed by Miguel Cohan. 2014. Argentina/Spain: Cameo, 2015. DVD.
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